



Adrian Lester with Eyra Norman at Samling Artist Programme Masterclass. Photo: Mark Pinder

# 30th Birthday Celebrations

**To celebrate 30 years of musical excellence, we are shining the spotlight on the people at the heart of our work with two special concerts.**

Here in our home in the North East, Samling Academy Singers invite you to a glittering cabaret in Sage Two at The Glasshouse. This semi-staged concert of words and music takes the glamour of Gatsby's parties, Venetian carnivals and moonlit nights in Paris as its inspiration. Rehearsals have just started under the direction of Samling Artists Miranda Wright and music director and pianist Sid Ramchander, and we'll be joined by some very special guests.

Our friends in the South will be able to share our celebrations at Wigmore Hall on Friday 6 November for 'Serenade: To Music'. For the first time, our annual showcase brings together musicians from our two core programmes. Samling Artists soprano Nardus Williams, mezzo-soprano Cláudia Ribas, baritone Felix Gygli, pianists Jonathan Ware and Alfred Fardell will be joined on stage by four recent and current singers from Samling Academy. Together they will celebrate the art of music and its power to change lives.

But before that, we are looking forward to being back at Marchmont House in high summer with our Artist Programme when we will be welcoming eight new singers and pianists. The week will be led by the Italian soprano Barbara Frittoli, pianist Roger

Vignoles and the actor James Garnon. Do join us for an afternoon of musical discovery on Saturday 1 August at our ever-popular public masterclass, with tea and homemade cakes in the gardens during the interval.

The Artist Programme is of course the engine that drives everything we do, launching stars since the charity was founded in 1996. Highlights of this year's achievements include our new patron Louise Alder winning the Singer Award at the RPS Awards; Hector Bloggs and Eyra Norman winning the First Prize and Song Prize at the recent Ferrier Awards and the news that Nicky Spence will lead the celebrations at the Last Night of the Proms.

We continue to inspire the next generation of singers through our work in state secondary schools in the North East. The impact of these programmes can be seen in our intake for Samling Academy: almost half of our 2026/27 cohort have come to us from schools we have visited over the last three years, including students from our Singing Schools in Egglecliffe, Hexham and Morpeth. Read more about this year's schools visits on p3.

All this is possible because of people like you: individuals who share our passionate belief in giving opportunities to young people from all backgrounds to nurture their talent and inspire excellence.

Please help us to continue this work by donating to our 30th anniversary appeal.

## Making a difference

Nicky Spence OBE became a Samling Artist in 2005, after a week led by soprano Isobel Buchanan, actors Barbara Leigh-Hunt and Richard Pasco and vocal consultant Paul Farrington. Since then, his career has taken him to opera stages across the world, including Covent Garden and the New York Met and to the stage of the Royal Albert Hall for Last Night of the Proms. We asked him what being a Samling Artist means to him:



'Samling was a turning point in my development as a singer. The intensive coaching, space to be curious in safety, a storytelling focus, and inspiring artists gave me tools I still use daily. Just as importantly, I made friends and colleagues for life – an experience that was as joyful as it was transformative.'

Please help give today's young artists the same start as Nicky by donating to our 30th anniversary appeal. If everyone who reads this supports us, we will soon meet our target of £30,000 which will be matched by a generous donor.

**To donate, visit [samling.org.uk/support](http://samling.org.uk/support) or use the QR code**



## WHY SAMLING INSTITUTE?

'The week challenged me to think more imaginatively about my music-making and has given me new artistic confidence that I will carry forward into the next stage of my career. I feel incredibly honoured to be a Samling Artist and deeply grateful to the entire Samling team for their belief in young artists.' *Zheng Jiang*

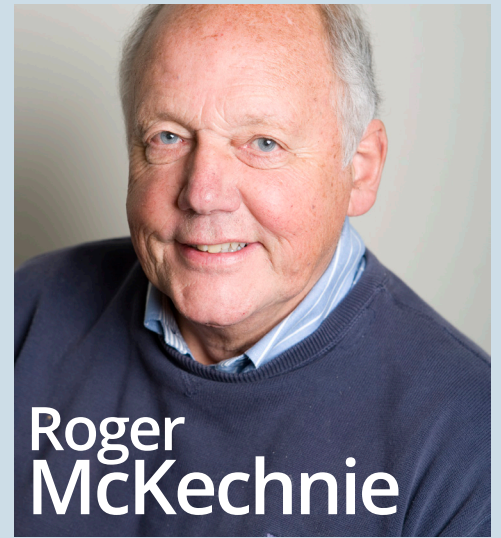
### All of us at Samling were saddened to learn of the death on 24 April of Roger McKechnie who founded the charity with Karon Wright 30 years ago.

Roger was born in Darlington and was a serial entrepreneur driven by a belief in the power of creativity to transform lives and businesses and demanded nothing less than the highest possible quality in everything he touched.

Following a degree from Newcastle University he had a successful business career in marketing and at the age of 40 he decided to take charge of his own destiny and started up, developed and then sold the upmarket, innovative Phileas Fogg snacks company. After Phileas Fogg he established

The Samling at Dovenest as a totally different boutique hideaway hotel in the Lake District and alongside the hotel he was instrumental with Karon in starting The Samling Foundation to encourage highly talented young artists at the start of their careers.

Karon said: 'Roger was a one off – whacky, challenging in all the best ways, kind, generous, clever and a whole of lot of fun to be with. He always focused on the positives and he surprised me countless times and I learned a huge amount about life from him. His family was everything to him and they would all gather for many years at Dilston House for our annual fundraising garden party which he and his wife Eileen so generously hosted and the sun always shone. We will miss him.'



**The first residential week of our anniversary year illustrated the virtuous circle of musical excellence that drives our work:** Samling Artist Anna Stéphany returned to lead the programme she once benefitted from in 2005, alongside Malcolm Martineau who has been with us from the very beginning and the line-up of new Samling Artists included former Academy Singer Philippe Durrant. We were also delighted to welcome a new voice, as acclaimed film and TV actor Adrian Lester

joined us. A large and enthusiastic audience at our public masterclass were treated to operatic fireworks by Handel and Mozart and songs by Schubert, Santoliquido and Elgar and insights on performance from our leaders. They also enjoyed meeting the artists and leaders over tea and cake in the beautiful public rooms at Marchmont House.

**Pictured here:** Samling Artists soprano Eyra Norman, mezzo-sopranos Caitlin Mackenzie and Louisa Stuart-Smith, countertenor Zheng Jiang, tenor Philippe Durrant, baritone Sonny Fielding and pianists George Herbert and Alfred Fardell and staff pianist Samling Artist Ella O'Neill.



**'Samling Institute has inspired our pupils and staff to sing with greater confidence, commitment and musicality, while creating a wonderful sense of community through music.'**

*Phil Rosier, Head of Music, Ponteland High School*



## Singing in Schools

**Samling Artists soprano Jessica Cale, tenor Nick Pritchard and pianist Alfred Fardell and a team of eight Samling Academy Singers held introductory Samling Futures workshops in seven state secondary schools across the region.**

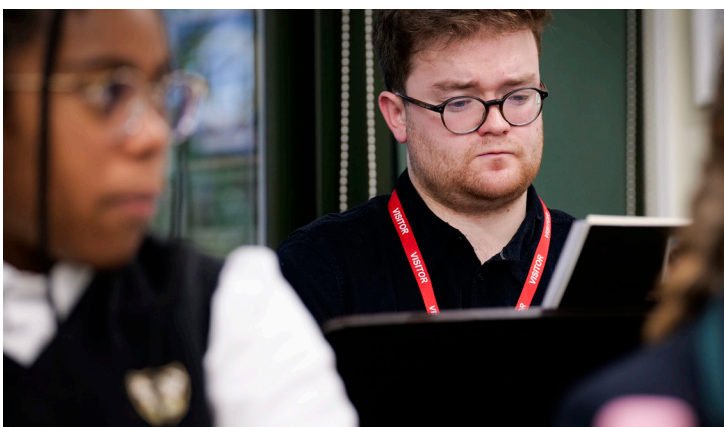
Through masterclasses, performance and group activities they introduced the techniques of classical singing to students at schools in Durham, Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside and Sunderland. Two of the Academy Singers who took part – Ava Newby and Olivia Rose – joined Samling Academy after we visited their school in Sunderland three years ago and it was a very special moment to take them back into their own school as ambassadors for the programme.

Queen Elizabeth High School in Hexham and Ponteland High School have both joined our Samling Singing Schools programme this year. Each school received a course of workshops and tuition for choirs, soloists and staff led by Samling Artist Miranda Wright, with open workshops to show some of the work to family, teachers and friends.

We look forward to welcoming all the students who successfully auditioned for Samling Academy as a result of our visits.



**Above:** Miranda Wright working with students and staff from Samling Singing Schools Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham and Ponteland High School. **Below:** Jessica Cale, Nick Pritchard and Alfred Fardell with Ava Newby and Olivia Rose at Samling Futures, St Anthony's Catholic Academy, Sunderland.



# Samling Academy The Party

**Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 July, 7.30pm**

Sage Two, The Glasshouse International  
Centre for Music

Tickets £20 [theglasshouseicm.org](http://theglasshouseicm.org)  
0191 443 4661

With balloons and banners and in glad rags and dancing shoes, Samling Academy invites you to a party. Celebrating the 30th birthday of Samling Institute's work inspiring musical excellence in young people, this semi-staged concert will introduce you to a cast of time-travelling revellers, the gate crashers and hangers-on in this fizzing evening of words and music.

**With Samling Artists:**

**Ted Black** Tenor

**Sid Ramchander** Music Director and Piano

**Miranda Wright** Director

And former Academy Singers sopranos **Camilla Harris** and **Zoë Jackson**

30th Anniversary  
1996–2026



## SAMLING IN MASTERCLASS

**Saturday 1 August, 2–5pm**  
Marchmont House, Duns, Berwickshire,  
TD10 6YL

Star Italian soprano Barbara Frittoli leads this summer's Samling Artist Programme alongside world-acclaimed song pianist Roger Vignoles and Shakespearean actor James Garnon. With staff pianist Samling Artist Jo Ramadan.

With Samling Artists

**Bella Marslen** soprano

**Maryam Wocial** soprano

**Katrina Paula Felsberga** soprano

**Sian Sulke** mezzo-soprano

**Will Prior** countertenor

**David Kennedy** baritone

**Archie Bonham** piano

**Yihan Zhao** piano

**Tickets** £25 available from  
[marchmonthouse.com](http://marchmonthouse.com)

A return bus transfer will run from Berwick-upon-Tweed station and can be booked with your ticket.



## SAMLING ACADEMY 9–11 & 23–25 October

Our 2026/27 cohort of thirty Academy Singers begin their year with six intensive days of coaching and workshops, directed by Caroline Dowdle. They'll work on every aspect of their vocal technique and stagecraft skills with a team made up of opera singers, vocal teachers, pianists, an actor and a movement specialist.



## Samling Academy In Concert Sunday 25 October, 3pm

Sage Two, The Glasshouse International  
Centre for Music.

See what our Samling Academy Singers have been working on as they put their skills into practice in a joyful afternoon of song and opera. **Tickets** available later in the year.



## SERENADE: TO MUSIC Celebrating 30 years of musical excellence

**Friday 6 November, 7.30pm**  
Wigmore Hall, London

This year's Showcase brings together all the strands of our work in a glorious evening of music-making.

With Samling Artists

**Nardus Williams** soprano

**Cláudia Ribas** mezzo-soprano

**Felix Gygli** baritone

**Jonathan Ware** piano

**Alfred Fardell** piano

**Tickets** £18 – £40 available now from  
[wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk) | 020 7935 2141



INSTITUTE FOR  
YOUNG ARTISTS

### Samling Institute for Young Artists

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[samling.org.uk](http://samling.org.uk)

Patrons: Sir Thomas Allen CBE, Louise Alder & James Baillieu

Artistic and Executive Director: Karon Wright MBE

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